



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Summary of Youth Tobacco Survey Findings Released**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health’s Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control today released a summary of the results of the North Dakota Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS). The YTS is designed to measure a variety of factors related to tobacco products among high school students and to assess how these factors change over time.

The YTS has been conducted in the spring of odd years since 2003. In 2007, 1,695 surveys were completed at North Dakota schools in grades nine through 12. The 2007 summary compares select findings from the past three surveys – including information about current tobacco use, health beliefs, social beliefs, community influence and media influence.

“It’s important that we track the trends relating to tobacco use and find out the attitudes and beliefs students have about tobacco,” said Karalee Harper, director of the Department of Health’s Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control. “When we know how students are, or are not, using tobacco and what they feel about tobacco use, we can plan how to help them – either by reinforcing their beliefs or by offering them strategies for making healthy decisions.”

Some findings of the survey include the following:

- Twenty-two percent of students in grades nine through 12 are current cigarette smokers. This percentage is down only slightly from the 2003 rate of 26.3 percent.
- Nearly all students believe they can get addicted to tobacco just like cocaine or heroin, and nearly all students think they can harm themselves if they smoke between one and five cigarettes per day.

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- More than 78 percent of students would prefer to date a nonsmoker. This percentage is up from 71.5 percent in 2005, reflecting the idea that smoking may be becoming less acceptable among North Dakota teens.
- Sixty-one percent of students learn about the dangers of tobacco use in ninth grade, but only 33 percent learn about the dangers of tobacco use in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Similarly, nearly 56 percent of students learn about the dangers of secondhand smoke in ninth grade and only 27 percent learn about the same topic in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

“It’s encouraging to see that a vast majority of students understand the health dangers associated with tobacco use,” Harper said. “But it’s discouraging to see that the tobacco use percentages have dropped only slightly since 2003. That is an indicator that we need to do more to help our young people resist the urge to experiment with tobacco. We need to present the straight facts about tobacco use and help teens make decisions that will save them from becoming addicted adult users who struggle to quit.”

Other information gathered from the survey includes age of initiation, access to tobacco, cessation beliefs and attempts, perceptions of tobacco use of peers, attitudes toward tobacco advertising, parental influence, and beliefs about secondhand smoke. For more information about the complete survey, contact Clint Boots, data analyst for the Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control at 701.328.4566 or [cboots@nd.gov](mailto:cboots@nd.gov).

The survey summary can be viewed at [www.ndhealth.gov/tobacco](http://www.ndhealth.gov/tobacco).

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